open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Grade 5 Activity: Racism Imperils the Unity of the Body of Christ

Doctrinal elements:

The Profession of Faith

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.

- The Church has a great diversity of members; but sin can imperil her unity. **(CCC 795, 814, 815)**

The Seven Sacraments of the Church

The Sacrament of Baptism

- "From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes: 'For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.'" **(CCC 1267)**

"Our faith gives us a treasury of inspiring holy men and women who courageously worked toward racial reconciliation, showing us the way forward."

– *U.S. bishops,* Open Wide Our Hearts

Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Recognize the unity of the Church across cultures (CCC 814).
2. Understand that we are united across the human limits of nation culture, race and sex due to our Baptism, which makes us members of the Body of Christ and thus "members one of another" (CCC 1267, quoting Eph. 4:25).
3. Celebrate the diversity and gifts of the Church's members—diversity that is not opposed to the Church's unity (CCC 814).
4. Understand how sin, including acts of racism, can threaten the gift of unity when we fail to recognize the dignity of some members of our human family (CCC 814).

Materials Needed

- Copies of the handout "Prophetic Witnesses Against Racism"
- Butcher paper
- Markers

Quotes from *Open Wide our Hearts*

- "Holy Scripture boldly proclaims, 'See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are' (1 John 3:1). This love 'comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a "we" which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28)."

- "Every racist act – every such comment, every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin – is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God. In these and in many other such acts, the sin of racism persists in our lives, in our country and in our world."

- "Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all. After all, 'Within [the human] family,' as St. John Paul II said, 'each people preserves and expresses its own identity and enriches others with its gifts of culture' (John Paul II, Address at the Meeting with the Native Peoples of the Americas, September 14, 1987, no. 4)."

- "Our faith gives us a treasury of inspiring holy men and women who courageously worked toward racial reconciliation, showing us the way forward."

Instructions for the Lesson

Begin with this prayer:

> **Children's Prayer: We Are All in God's Image**
>
> Loving Father,
>
> Thank you for the many beautiful colors
> and languages of the world
> and for making all your children unique.
>
> Thank you for creating me in your image.
> Thank you for loving me and making me wonderful.
> Help me to love like you.

Help me to share your love
with all the children you have made,
for they are unique and wonderful.

Amen.

Introduce the following concepts:

- Our Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ and members one of another. Our unity as a Church is across the human limits of culture, race and sex.
- As members of the worldwide (and heavenly) Body of Christ, we celebrate the diversity and gifts of the Church's members. Diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. We celebrate diversity in our communities and within the Church.
- Sin, including acts of racism, can threaten the gift of unity when we fail to recognize the dignity of some members of our human family.

Explain that today we are going to do a small group project to learn about four holy witnesses against racism.

- Divide students into groups and assign to each group one of the witnesses against racism on this handout.
- Distribute one handout to each student. Distribute a piece of butcher paper and markers to each small group.

Provide these instructions to the small groups:

- Pick a Reader, Recorder, and Presenter.
- The Recorder should write the name of the group's assigned "holy witness against racism" on the top of the paper and then draw a horizontal line and a vertical line across the paper to divide it into 4 equal sections.
- The Reader should read out loud the profile of their assigned "witness." Everyone else can follow along on their handout.
- Group members should discuss the following questions about their assigned "witness," with the Recorder taking notes on the large paper.
    1. Who was he or she?
    2. What racism did he/she experience? (What did he/she experience that imperiled the unity of the Body of Christ?)
    3. How did he or she act in order to heal, address, or transform his or her experience?
    4. What can you do to follow his or her example?

Have the recorder from each group report to the large group on behalf of his/her group.

Discuss why the people we lifted up today were motivated by their faith.

At home

Tell the story of the holy person you learned about in this lesson.

- How can your family follow the example this person set?
- What about your faith motivates you to act?

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